

GEN. HENRY'S REFORMS.

CHANGES WHICH ARE GOING FORWARD IN PORTO RICO.

AN EFFORT TO APPROPRIATE LAND TAXES MORE EQUITABLY—TAXES REMOVED FROM THE SALE OF BREAD AND MEAT AND PLACED UPON LIQUOR AND TO BACCO—SANITATION AT SAN JUAN.

San Juan, Porto-Rico, March 9. Nothing shows more clearly the character of a military administration than its general order. From the first that of Major-General G. H. Henry has been marked by a spirit of tolerance, of progress and of justice, no less than by decision and firmness. His orders appear to be rather the productions of a civil governor than of a military commander, for few soldiers, from the nature of their education and training, have clear ideas upon taxation, municipal government and allied subjects. They are not expected to be statesmen or political economists, but General Henry is proving himself to be something of both, as the following general orders of recent date will demonstrate. Here is one upon the subject of taxation:

In order to remedy the evils due to unjust assessments, the following are the orders concerning the taxation of lands on this island: First—The assessment of taxes upon lands shall hereafter be made in accordance with the various conditions existing in the island and the various conditions of the land taxed.

Second—In accordance with the various conditions there will be taxes on cane lands, coffee lands, tobacco lands, pasture lands, minor produce lands and forest lands.

Third—In accordance with the quality of the land, there will be taxes of the first, second and third classes—the first class comprising the best lands, the second class the next best, and the third class the poorest.

Fourth—On all lands of the first class there will be a tax of one peso per cuerda (acre); on all lands of the second class a tax of 50 cents per cuerda; on all lands of the third class a tax of 25 cents per cuerda.

Fifth—Each municipal corporation will appoint a classifying commission which will select sub-commissions in the different districts of each town, and these sub-commissions to report to the classifying commission on the class of lands in their respective districts.

Sixth—These commissions will be guided by the following instructions: (a) First-class lands are plains and valleys and other alluvial lands lying near settled communities, highways, railroads and seaports, and the lands of drained lagoons and mangrove marshes.

(b) Second-class lands are the highland plains, generally overgrown with oxides of iron and known in the country as clayish lands.

(c) Third-class lands are rocky hills and hills abounding in organic debris.

(d) First-class coffee lands are highlands having a calcareous or limy formation.

(e) First-class tobacco lands are valley lands watered by rivers.

(f) Second-class tobacco lands are loamy highlands mixed with clay and sand.

(g) Third-class tobacco lands are sandy lands along the coast and calcareous lands among the hills.

(h) First-class pasture lands are valleys, lagoons and glens, where grow "malojilla" and Guinea grass.

(i) Second-class pasture lands are those on the hills and on the coast where grow Guinea grass and coconuts.

(j) Third-class pasture lands are those along the coast and limy hills where grow only brush, "rat-tail," sweet grass, etc.

(k) First-class minor produce lands are valley lands.

(l) Second-class minor produce lands are highlands.

(m) Third-class minor produce lands are sandy and limy lands.

(n) First-class forest lands are those growing virgin forests whose timber can supply building and cabinet woods—e. g., "acetiillo," cedar, "capa," "ausubo," etc.

(o) Second-class forest lands are lands with a few trees, and coconuts growing only bushes around for fuel.

Seventh—Taxes on lands whose owners reside abroad will be increased by 50 per cent.

Eighth—All ordinances or decrees conflicting with the provisions of this order are hereby revoked and rendered null and void.

The foregoing order, which has been greatly discussed upon the island, and public opinion is still divided as to its excellence, but its ultimate results can scarcely fail to be beneficial. If it secures an equitable apportionment, at least justice will have been done. Of course, those whose taxes shall be increased under its provisions will complain, but their opposition will be offset by the approval of the greater number who will pay less than formerly, as it is said that the general result will be a reduction.

Strange as it may seem, the principal municipal taxes were formerly placed upon bread or flour and meat, while tobacco, cigars and cigarettes and alcoholic drinks were almost untaxed, thus reversing the usual order of things. And indeed it is rather difficult to determine which class of articles is considered the most necessary here. General Henry has, however, decided the matter by the publication of an order declaring the industry of making and selling bread free from all municipal taxation, and making free from all taxes, whether direct or indirect. All industries based upon the sale of meat, such as those of victuallers, butchers and slaughter-houses, are also exempt from all municipal dues.

In order to make up for the reduction in municipal receipts occasioned by these exemptions, municipal corporations are authorized to issue licenses for the sale of all liquors, cigars, cigarettes, smoking and chewing tobacco, in whatever shape or form. The following schedule of license fees is fixed: For the sale of liquor, \$10; for the sale of cigars, \$5; for the sale of cigarettes, \$5; for the sale of smoking and chewing tobacco, \$5.

For every liquor or tobacco store or stand in towns of from 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants, \$50; in towns of from 10,000 to 15,000 inhabitants, \$75; in towns of from 15,000 to 20,000 inhabitants, \$100; in towns above 20,000 inhabitants, \$125.

The following order, while it caused dissatisfaction among the relatively small creditor class, was thoroughly approved by the more numerous debtor class, in whose interest, at least when agriculturists, it was issued:

In view of the facts that it has been represented to the Department Commander by petition and otherwise to his satisfaction that, owing to the crisis caused by the late war and by the scarcity of money of the island seeking investment, planters owning valuable estates are unable to meet their debts, and that a number of firms in liquidating their business interests in the island are proceeding to foreclose mortgages on plantations to the great distress of the owners thereof, and under existing laws these proceedings are of a summary nature, so that the said creditors can be forced to liquidate the time judicial notice is given, thus allowing debtors no sufficient opportunity to raise money, it is hereby directed in the interest of equity and to save the agricultural industry from loss and ruin that the said laws of foreclosure and all legal or judicial proceedings thereunder with reference to agricultural property and machinery be and they are hereby suspended for the period of one year from this date, namely, January 10, 1899, provided that the interest on such debts is paid when due at a rate not exceeding 10 per cent per annum.

This order was not intended to affect proceedings for the collection of insular or municipal taxes.

It has been determined at places or towns where apparently troops and citizens do not harmonize, owing to improper interference of troops, to withdraw such from those towns and to hold the alcalde and his council strictly responsible for law and order in his municipality. It is the duty of the alcalde to see to it that there is no indifference and neglect of duty, towns in which said neglect occurs will be put under a military officer and necessary troops, and the functions of the alcalde, council and courts be suspended, and the town governed by military law.

In the proposed movement of troops away from the island, many towns must be left without troops, and if the civil authorities can be induced to assume the responsibility of law and order for them, if councils are composed of men who are indifferent to progress, honesty of action, or not properly representing the people, they will, on representation to these headquarters by the business men of the municipality, be relieved and others put in their place.

It is hoped that it will not be necessary to make an example of any municipality by thus showing that they are incapable of governing themselves, and that the island and stop its progress, or future legislation.

This order will be communicated to all concerned, and placed in the "Official Gazette," or other papers of the island.

SOUTH SEA SHOALS.

THE FAILURE OF THE TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT.

NECESSITY FOR STRENGTHENING THE NAVY AND OCCUPYING PERMANENTLY THE COAST-ING STATION AT PAGO-PAGO.

Washington, March 23 (Special).—History often repeats itself, not as an echo does, note for note and tone for tone, but rather like a musician, who reproduces a theme under numerous forms with different variations, so that an unaccustomed ear does not always follow the original motive as it winds its way through a more or less confusing labyrinth of sound. Experts in music and in statecraft ought, however, to recognize the underlying motive in the new development and be able to determine its value as groundwork for future combinations. The rule of three may successfully solve problems in proportion, but the rule by three has never yet cleared up the difficulties of any complicated situation. Government by triumvirates means the forcible or diplomatic elimination of two elements out of three, or else a discouraging series of "new deals"—supremacy or compromise.

The first Roman triumvirate led to the triumph of Julius Caesar. The second secured the sovereignty for Octavian. The triumvirate of the 18th Brumaire simply transformed First Consul Bonaparte into the Emperor Napoleon. The most brilliant coalition formed by men of the same race, language and traditions have always proved weak and short-lived. How much more unstable, then, a government obtained by the mere juxtaposition of individuals of diverse origin, are set to work together in a body or appointed to follow each other in turn. Yet this last was the system chosen by the Berlin Congress of 1878 to direct the destinies of Samoa. Bismarck must have smiled grimly in his sleeve as he helped mix the incongruous compound that civilization offered as a soothing panacea to the disturbed interior economy of the South Sea Islands.

It is said that the only island that only in this wise, without antagonizing two powerful nations, could Germany's greater commercial interests insert the wedge that in course of time might open, for her benefit alone, the desirable Samoan system. When necessary a consul could easily be recalled—the doling of a Rautel disavowed—while some day, in a moment of American indifference or British preoccupation, the German might come the key of the Samoan situation. The Triple Alliance may help to preserve the balance of Europe, but a tripartite protectorate seems to be a trifle topheavy for the equilibrium of Samoa.

IMPORTANCE OF COASTING STATIONS. Once more this triple-expansion engine is in need of repair, and the question arises: Can it be run at all without producing continual friction and periodic explosion? Is the game worth the candle for the United States commercially or otherwise? Germany has by far the greatest business interests in Samoa, practically a monopoly, and her citizens form more than half of the entire island population.

But its interests in Samoa are not "in the ring." But its interests in Samoa are not merely business ones; they are naval as well, and naval interests in the near future will be but another name for National interests. Naval authorities and people who have studied the subject think the foothold of this group there one not to be lightly relinquished or to be bought and paid for.

The United States has bought Pago-Pago and paid for it. It is a safe and beautiful harbor and would be a most useful coaling station, and to-day coaling stations are things no nation that pretends to a navy at all can afford to lose or to neglect. English ships that can coal every three thousand miles, nearly all around the globe, know full well the value of such acquisitions to the squadron of modern battleships, which are more useless in all modern navies, strength when beyond reach of fuel and friendly dockyards than was even the tiny fleet of Christopher Columbus venturing out on unknown and stormy seas.

Public sentiment seems to demand that the United States morally and physically "back up" its title to this valuable possession. Now, even in private life may sometimes be a cheap luxury, but in public sentiment, whether right or wrong, is invariably a costly indulgence. It must be paid for by the people who, if they insist on acting upon it, should be willing to have sufficient public revenue appropriated, through the proper channels, to secure successfully the ends in view. We have at present a finger in several different pies: The Hawaiian trait has fallen into our lap; we have secured Pago-Pago, and we have a protective one on Cuba; we claim a slice of the Samoan tartlet, and if we wish all these fingers to remain unmolested we must guard them in such manner that no steel gauntlet or another hand will have the power to crush them; for other things being equal, one must not forget that \$50 a ton armor pitted against that costing \$20 a ton will, generally speaking, come out second best in a collision of forces.

ONE LESSON TAUGHT BY SAMOA. Samoa has already taught us one valuable lesson. In the disastrous hurricane of 1889 we had a striking example of the survival of the fittest. In that fight for life and property, the English and the Samoan, the commander of the Adler, who managed to save his crew when he saw his ship was doomed, had pluck enough; the crew of the Trenton, who so lustily cheered the Callopo as she scraped by out of the deathtrap they themselves were drifting into, had plenty of pluck; but pluck did not prevent German and American ships alike from being finally reduced to junk on the coral reef of Samoa.

"That disaster," wrote Stevenson, "indirectly and by a process of selection, continuing founded the modern Navy of the United States."

It is an expensive as well as a perilous process to learn wisdom only through disaster. This time the country ought to profit by the success that even a partial preparation made possible, and, whatever else it may or may not do, let it insist that the Navy get all the men and material it requires, that engineers have good ships, and that the best engineers be engaged to be in an emergency \$50,000,000 worth of cure will not accomplish as much as \$5,000,000 worth of prevention will do to-day.

Even the superb confidence of successive Presidents that made it possible to have a few weeks, and to create expert officers in every branch by a stroke of the pen, really impelled to acknowledge that "God Almighty Himself takes time to make a sailor." Later we appear to recognize the fact that weak officers, like old garments, last longer when judiciously reinforced, and the Philadelphia has been sent to Samoa on the order of the Navy to reinforce the ship Porpoise of the responsibility of sheltering them whenever political relations become a trifle strained.

The Admiral's instructions are doubtless peace-and-Pago-Pago, and the Admiral's duty is to see that the possible condition. Nevertheless, when one small island holds at the same time two native factions and three foreign ones, the Admiral's duty is to recognize the fact that weak officers, like old garments, last longer when judiciously reinforced, and the Philadelphia has been sent to Samoa on the order of the Navy to reinforce the ship Porpoise of the responsibility of sheltering them whenever political relations become a trifle strained.

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SECRETARY ALGER'S RULING.

NO CHIEF OF STAFF TO BE DETACHED TO ANY DUTY WITHOUT HIS APPROVAL.

Washington, March 23.—The following order has been issued at the War Department: Headquarters of the Army, Adjutant-General's Office.

The following decision has been made and is published for the information and guidance of all concerned: War Department, Washington, March 23, 1899. Order: That hereafter no chief or acting chief of staff corps shall be detached or ordered to any duty by any authority without the approval of the Secretary of War.